

STATE OF SOCIETY REPORTS

ANNAPOLIS VALLEY MONTHLY MEETING

Annapolis Valley Monthly Meeting continued to focus on our weekly Meetings for Worship. In 2018 we had laid down our Meeting's committees due to insufficient Friends to carry on the work. So in 2019 we did little outreach or hosting events where the wider community was invited.

Although only a handful of our members were active with the meeting, we had a few new regular attenders who helped make our worship rich and rewarding and attendance was regular and consistent. We continue to begin our worship with an inspirational reading which often inspires vocal ministry. We engage in personal sharing with tea after the close of the worship.

In 2019 we welcomed one of our new attenders into membership – our first new member in many years. This Friend felt 2019 was a special year spiritually, which included seeing the members of the meeting comfortably expressing their faith by 'letting their lives speak', and feeling accepted and loved. Because of this member's interest, we were able to again send a representative to the meetings of the Wolfville Area InterChurch Council and we engaged in some joint activities with them, including a Good Friday service and assisting with the Christmas hamper project.

We are grateful for the sharing and ministry that occurs during our meetings and we have deep connections with each other which extend into other aspects of our lives outside of our Quaker meeting. Our connections with Friends in the Atlantic region have been through our participation in the Atlantic Friends Gathering in May and our Atlantic Half-Yearly Meeting in November. We find these gatherings joyful and positive. One of our attenders helped organize the gathering in 2019.

In 2019 we celebrated the life of one of our founding members, Peggy Hope-Simpson, who passed away at the age of 97. We held the memorial service in the Wolfville Baptist Church, incorporating traditions from Quakers, Buddhism and Judaism. It was a wonderful testament to the life of Peggy because so many people came from the many different organizations she had founded and worked with during her life. Their shared testimonies of how she inspired them re-inspires us. It was also a gift to our meeting to plan this memorial service with her family and with some of our inactive members whose hearts are with the meeting.

Our Meetings for Worship for Business have been irregular. We have been trying to focus on our spiritual well-being, listening to the needs of our members and attenders, rather than trying to do everything. We accept the focus on what we can do, rather than what we 'should' be doing. Although we could not follow through on everything a Monthly Meeting does, we have maintained meeting status. In 2019 we approved adopting an adaptation of the CYM safe nurture policy. We continue to be interested in the business of Canadian Yearly Meeting and were pleased to nominate an Annapolis Valley Friend for Clerk of CYM. This nomination was approved in August and brings us closer to our wider Quaker family.

We socialize frequently with potluck meals. We meet about once a month at the Canard House which is owned by a Friend from Texas who visits periodically and is now part of our meeting, along with his

house which is also becoming part of our community. On World Quaker Day we held a special Meeting for Worship where we showed the FWCC video clips on sustainability in a time when climate change is affecting our Friends around the world.

CALGARY MONTHLY MEETING

Calgary Monthly Meeting has developed a strong spiritual base with a small core of members. One elder said “There is something timeless in the meeting, something that holds it. It was there when we were a tiny meeting and you felt that if you didn’t attend, it wouldn’t happen: it is still here.”

Our meeting is mostly silent with little spoken ministry. Although we encourage vocal ministry most people seem satisfied with the deep silence. The afterwords often function as an informal worship sharing, when we speak of things that we have read, learned, or experienced, punctuated by worshipful silence.

We are in a state of transition due to an influx of new attenders, most of whom are under 40. As any group ages and then revives, relationships and assumptions are lost and gained as the dynamics change. We welcome this change. It is time to listen to our new attenders. What do they need? What do they seek? We are more than just a social justice or environmental action group. People can join those, make friends and do good works. Quaker communities offer something different, a spiritual basis for working together. How do we do outer work from an inner, spiritual space? How do we learn the Quaker processes of listening, waiting, threshing, seasoning, and discerning the sense of the meeting?

This has been a time of relearning and clarifying Quaker process for all. We learned that we could not assume that any new attender, young or old, could pick up Quaker process by reading *Faith and Practice* and *Organization and Procedure*. Active guidance by seasoned members and formal learning experiences became more important.

We received with pleasure the report from Young Adult Friends and the calls for action to Monthly Meetings. We were reminded to incorporate mentoring and training into all our tasks. We identified which positions and roles can best be held by Young Adult Friends, new Friends, and by new attenders; and which should be held by seasoned Friends. We supported Friends who wish to attend sessions at Canadian Yearly Meeting in Session and at Pendle Hill.

Several of our Young Adult Friends have initiated meeting for eating at a local restaurant, after Meeting for Worship. These luncheons have attracted up to 10 people who stayed for several hours. It is a good way for new attenders to ask questions and build fellowship: a space to discuss Quaker spirituality and life in this time of new technology, different work styles, and new forms of connecting.

We gratefully accepted a transfer of membership, we are in the process of a clearness committee for another membership, and we joyfully welcomed a new baby. We held a Special Meeting on Membership to discuss what it means to be a member, how to decide if we should become a member, whether we should ask attenders to become members, children’s membership, and why people who never attend do not ask to be removed from our membership and email lists. The Ad Hoc Committee on Membership submitted a report summarizing the various issues and perspectives and proposing an

action plan. Friends felt enriched by the sharing which has occurred and will continue to research how other meetings handle membership issues.

Our newly revived Outreach and Social Action Committee has updated our website, revitalized our email list and contacts, initiated contact with the University of Calgary's Chaplaincy Centre, and has been involved in a number of activities around reconciliation. These activities resulted in a realization that we needed to clarify our discernment processes and modes of communicating, to know when we are acting as representative of Calgary Monthly Meeting while at the same time supporting the leadings of members.

We supported one of our members to attend a Quaker Wisdom School with Marcelle Martin, Paulette Meier, and Cynthia Bourgeault, at the Pendle Hill Retreat Center. This prompted us to begin a book study of Marcelle Martin's book "Our Life is Love." Twice a month, we gather an hour before Meeting for Worship to learn Quaker history, and compare the early Quaker stories and our own seeking. The discussions often enrich our afterwords.

Our annual retreat focused on the Gospel of Thomas. The Gospel of Thomas is a very early gospel that was rejected by the Catholic Church. In this gospel, Yeshua (Jesus) is a Wisdom Teacher, teaching us how to be a son or daughter of God, here and now. There is no narrative, no mythology, crucifixion or resurrection, simply challenging quotes from Yeshua to ponder and hold in the Light.

Our library committee has cleaned up the library, and sorted and catalogued the books. Once they are done cataloging the pamphlets we will post the collection on our webpage so that we can easily check the contents.

During the COVID-19 epidemic our meeting, like many others, has turned to Zoom to facilitate our Meetings for Worship, Ministry and Counsel, and Meeting for Worship with attention to business. Our online meetings have been as large as our in-person meetings. While we are saddened at the loss of the physical contact, it has allowed isolated friends to attend, to our great joy. We will endeavour to support our isolated Friends in this manner once our regular meetings resume and we find a new normal.

COLDSTREAM MONTHLY MEETING

Coldstream Meeting has an average of 12-14 at Meeting for Worship most Sundays. We sometimes have silent meetings and sometimes have ministry but regardless we often feel a sense of how gathered our meetings are. Though small we have developed good relationships with one another, and we put earnest effort into being supportive of other's initiatives.

We offered a workshop, both within our meeting and to Pelham HYM that included an Indigenous history and an overview of the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Recommendations and how they are being implemented. The workshop was created and led by a member of our Meeting's Truth and Reconciliation Response Committee (TRRC). As a result of the workshop we have gained a better understanding of the relationship between Native nations and settlers.

In addition to the workshop, the TRRC initiated and worked in conjunction with 14 other groups to sponsor a free speaker series at the London Public Library on pertinent Indigenous issues. It consisted of 4 sessions and attracted more than 300 people. It was heavily supported by local Indigenous people and had the support of other social justice groups

Though winter travel is becoming more challenging for us as an older population, we did hold our annual February retreat. A member of our Meeting is a Death Douala and she shared her great knowledge of dying and the final responsibilities of caring for and interring the remains. She provided the Meeting with a binder of not-so-readily-available information. The information will be very useful for our future reference as we have the care of a cemetery

We have not had children regularly attending Meeting for several years. This year, prompted by the attendance of a child, we rejuvenated the First Day School room and established a plan for programming so that now we are better prepared to welcome children.

We continue to work with an Interfaith Refugee Committee, to bring, settle and support refugees. Recently our support saw 7 people settle in our region from Somalia and Eritrea. This takes patience, commitment and endurance but through the Interfaith committee we are waiting for a Syrian family and open to other sponsorships.

Throwing water balloons and plastic chickens, eating picnic potluck and solving quizzes all add to the gaiety of our annual picnic. This happens each summer and in January we also get our amusement when we perform for each other at our Twelfth Night talent celebration.

Once a month we have potluck and on another Sunday we share coffee and singing. These add to the time we have together. Keeping in touch with each other's lives allows us the opportunity to provide and receive unexpected love and support.

A Memorial Meeting for a beloved member, with grateful participation by his family and the celebration of the marriage of two dear and long-time members of Friends are all part of this year's journey, our sorrows and our joys.

For many years now we have after-Worship dialogue on thoughtful quotations that are chosen by individuals from the meeting. Added to this is our exchange and sharing time after worship. Though our Meeting has an older demographic and is physically smaller we still feel a vitality, a need to participate, and a need to grow.

COWICHAN VALLEY MONTHLY MEETING

In 2019, Cowichan Valley Monthly Meeting met on the first and third Sundays in the St. Ann's Garden Building at Providence Farm and on the second and fourth Sundays at Ts'i'ts'uwatul' Lelum in Duncan, BC. During 2019 our usual attendance at meetings for worship averaged 15 people, including members, attenders, visitors, drop-ins, members of the new Saltspring Island Worship Group, which is under our care, and occasionally children. We welcomed one new member this year, who transferred from another meeting after moving to this area.

We value worshipping in community. Our essence is silence with occasional vocal ministry, which is one of the things we value about CVMM. CVQs are welcoming. This comes through in the ‘spirit’ of worship, holding its members and attenders in loving light. After each meeting for worship we share after-thoughts and then stay for coffee, muffins, and conversation. ..

We have developed an ‘out of the box’ approach to organizational functions in an effort to grow and deepen our community. Our conscious decision has been that rather than doing things as separate committees, we act as a committee of the whole with decentralized power. We rotate and share presiding and recording clerking responsibilities. We alternate the time of our monthly Meeting for Worship for Business between early morning and early afternoon, starting with a potluck breakfast or lunch. We are all responsible for peace and social action as well as pastoral care. We create committees of care and other committees as needed. We quite like this because it is much less onerous and we don’t get burnt out. Using this approach doesn’t mean that no one is responsible. It means that we each take responsibility for volunteering to do what needs to be done, whether this is turning down the heat at the end of the meeting or making sure that someone receives pastoral care.

One Sunday each month in 2019, we stayed after Meeting for Worship for lunch, followed by a presentation or workshop. Topics included justice issues in Venezuela, environmental restoration, pastoral care, the Draw-Down project, Family Constellations, yearly meeting organization and structure, and a summary of a CYM course on colonialism that one member had videoed.

We hosted events at least once a month throughout the year. Matt Legge presented two public talks on his new book, *Are We Done Fighting?* We held a summer solstice and a December gathering for learning more about each other and deepening our relationships. Several Friends cooked and served a monthly supper at the Duncan United Church for people who are homeless.

Friends helped organize and/or participated in small and large community events including Fridays for Climate strikes organized by the Cowichan Earth Guardians; mental health advocacy events to reduce stigma about mental illness, homelessness, and addiction; one Friend attended a monthly support group for people supporting mentally ill family members; the Alternatives to Violence Project at William Head Penitentiary; Project Drawdown to reverse global warming; memorial meetings in a seniors care home; food security; intergenerational and intercultural community-building; ecological restoration work; nature education, reconciliation and watershed stewardship, and the Quw’utsun Heritage River Day hosted by Cowichan Tribes and Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable .

Some Friends participated in Western Half-yearly Meeting and Canada Yearly meeting, CFSC Indigenous Peoples committee, CFSC, and Representative meeting. One member served as the Quaker representative with the KAIROS delegation to Palestine/Israel in November, 2019. Her experiences are shared in this YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZ6fSHX8Ry4>.

HAMILTON MONTHLY MEETING

2019 has been a year of contrasts. We have experienced both joy and sorrow. We have been refreshed by our worship and drained by the unexpected. We have been sustained through all the ups and downs by the depth of our community together while upholding each other in The Light.

A small group of untiringly dedicated Friends worked hard to settle our newcomers from Syria into their new home in Canada. We rejoiced with the newcomers when their daughter and granddaughter arrived from Turkey in May, after much advocacy by Hamilton Monthly Meeting (HMM) on their behalf. The safe arrival of a new granddaughter to the newcomers was a time of celebration for us. Unexpected health issues and unexpected emotional issues have extended our expected commitment to the settling-in process. While Friends have steadfastly provided the extra support that has been needed there is a certain tiredness, as a result, in the fabric of our energy.

A source of delight has been our First Day School (FDS). There were 5 in the 11-14 group. A fresh crop of little ones started attending FDS in April. The 4 new, younger children have a separate program from the older group with both groups coming together to work on the Christmas presentation. Their creative take on the story of Scrooge was a highlight and an inspiration to us all. We thank the Friend who wrote the play and the Friend who worked with her to coach the children. We are always interested to hear about our FDS alumni and how they are exploring new horizons grounded in their FDS experience.

We held a one day retreat at Cedar Haven in May. F/friends took time to consider “More Than Talkin’: The Truth About Quaker Ministry” while enjoying fellowship together in a restful country setting. Potlucks followed by presentations and discussion have challenged and nourished us both individually and as a community. We shared poetry, learnt about a Friend’s work with the Cree of James Bay, and heard of the current work of CFSC as presented to us by Matt Legge, speaking of his new book for CFSC, *Are We Done Fighting?*.

In response to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, HMM took a decision this fall to become more educated regarding challenges facing the Indigenous Community. To that end a potluck and discussion event was organized by the newly- formed Truth and Reconciliation ad hoc committee. The focus of the event was a segment of the video series, “Hear our Voices”, followed by discussion. The discussion was led by Judith Murray who had directed the series for the United Church of Canada. Further segments of the video will be viewed and discussed in the new year.

At the centre of our life together at HMM is the regular opportunity to worship on Sunday. Vocal ministry and silent worship work together to energize us as we go out into our daily lives as bearers of The Light that has refreshed us in worship. Our average attendance is 18 with a larger gathering present when there is First Day School or a potluck. The Cambridge Worship Group continued to plan worship once a month, taking a break in the summer months. The average attendance was five, although an astonishing 11 attended one month! F/friends living in Cambridge are grateful of the opportunity to worship locally.

Friends are getting older and some have health issues to contend with as well. The Nominating Committee was stretched to fill positions while being grateful for the dedicated, joyful work of those able to serve on HMM's various committees and as representatives of HMM on committees in Hamilton. Eight Friends served Canadian Yearly Meeting in various capacities. We hosted a meeting of CYM's Discipline Review Committee. After many years of inspiring thought and discussion, the Peace Think Tank had run its course and was laid down. A beloved friend died in December, a few months after a joyous 99th birthday celebration. His gentle demeanor and passion for peace inspired us. He is dearly missed.

There are signs of new growth. Two attenders have applied for and been accepted into membership, and another has transferred her membership to HMM. New families have started worshipping with us and that gives us hope for the future. A more welcoming space has been created at the Meeting house by having a carpenter divide some of the long wooden benches in half and finishing them to match the original ones. The shorter benches are easier to move and can be arranged to suit the occasion. Another small room on the main floor has been made into a space with comfortable chairs and a welcoming aspect for small meetings or informal chats. Although we are small in number we remember that very little yeast makes a big difference to the quality of a loaf of bread. So, in our small way, we focus on what is at hand, and that is, as our FDS learned in their class this year, to be Candles in the Dark. We are grateful for each other at HMM as we bear witness to The Light together.

INTERIOR BC MONTHLY MEETING

In our report last year we wrote that the numbers in attendance at Monthly Meeting had risen and our numbers have stayed up this year. It is often that we have between 15 to 20 people at Meeting for Worship in Kelowna, although this is not the case for Meeting for Worship for business. People stay for sharing joys and sorrows, and lunch; some leave following this. We have spoken of having an educational session on Quaker process but so far have not done so. It seems that many attenders like the silent Meeting for Worship but not the business meeting or attendance at other Quaker meetings such as Western Half-Yearly Meeting (WHYM) and Canadian Yearly Meeting (CYM). We are supportive and caring for each other and there is a warm feeling of closeness on many occasions. We had requests from three people to become new members and three others by transfer from another Meeting. We were saddened by the laying down of Prince George Allowed Meeting. We will continue to explore ways to include Prince George Friends in our Meeting community.

Our April retreat was well-attended. Ministry and Counsel asked people to be responsible for input in their area of interest, and as a result we had a Death Café workshop on death and grieving and a discussion on forgiveness of others and ourselves. Other interests took us outside into the beautiful spring to enjoy a walking meditation, and into nature centering on birds.

Because of the distances we live from each other in coming from eight different communities, it has always been difficult to have joint projects. As a result, our outreach is on an individual level with others rather with Friends. We have one member on a CYM committee and we try to have a member attend Representative Meeting, WHYM, and CYM. Three talks for Matt Legge from Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC), speaking about his newly-published book, were organized within our Monthly Meeting area.

Kamloops Worship Group

Kamloops Worship Group continues to meet twice monthly. Those who began meeting last year continued to find it a blessing to be able to meet in our home community. We welcomed a new attender and several enquirers. The small size of our group is not a limitation: we are comfortable with each other and find the worship and sharing to be deep and supportive. One highlight was our welcome gathering for a new baby born to a member of the group. We have generally met in the home of two Friends, but are trying to find a community location that suits our needs. We also engaged in some community outreach by organizing a well-attended public talk for Matt Legge.

Lillooet Worship Group

This group of two meets faithfully in their rural home every Sunday from 11 to 12. The divine presence is easily felt meeting on the banks of the Fraser River in the beauty of the Lillooet hills. Both members continue activity at the broader Quaker level as Associate members of CFSC. This and local community, Spirit-led work brings Spirit to their lives. The members miss the presence of other people, especially the opportunity for more spoken ministry, and would appreciate visits from other Friends from time to time.

KITCHENER AREA MONTHLY MEETING

In 2019 members of Kitchener Area Monthly Meeting (KAMM) gathered weekly for unprogrammed worship. Within these meetings there was often a deep sense of gathered silence and ministry that resonated with those present. Through committees of care and clearness committees KAMM has supported its members and attenders during difficult times, giving them a space to be vulnerable and share their troubles within the context of a Quaker gathering. Those who have been part of these committees have found the experience of being able to support friends extremely meaningful as well.

KAMM's monthly potlucks and discussions have also created deep connections within the community. These meals have created opportunities to share in community and culture as well as giving a space to meet and understand each other's needs in ways that are incredibly meaningful. These discussions have spanned topics such as an anti-oppression workshop, the sharing of gifts, and sustainability. The gift of sharing music has also been a vital part of worship, sometimes music will come out of the silence as ministry, as well as being a regular part of a monthly before meeting musical gathering. We have also had members travel to other Quaker meetings, and members from other Quaker meetings join us. This along with KAMM hosting Half-Yearly Meeting has created a sense of interconnectedness between KAMM and other meetings.

2019 also saw the departure of a long-time member who moved to another city. She was incredibly active in both childcare and care of the meeting house. This loss has led to some problems for members with young children, as their needs are no longer being met. However, a sub-committee has been working on resolving this problem. In 2019 we have had several fairly new people attend frequently and we were delighted when one of them applied for membership (and was joyously accepted into membership in 2020).

We also continue to have a relationship with the space sharers, Pins and Needles Fabric Company, who provide workshops for Indigenous youth, through our liaison person and through presentations they have made to our Meeting. We have become aware of many of the Indigenous groups and activities in the area.

Members and attenders of KAMM have also been involved informally with many issues, including many attending a climate strike, taking part in the Two-Row on the Grand event, and having one member of our community running for the Green Party and another for the NDP in the 2019 federal election.

Lucknow Worship Group

Our numbers have been stable during 2019, usually in the 10-15 range. We do not have a children's R.E. program as our young people have grown up. They sometimes attend Meeting for Worship when they are in the area. Our one teenager will be leaving for university this fall. Our practice is to meet twice monthly with locations, all currently within central and north Huron County, rotating among our members and attenders. This provides an opportunity for sharing responsibility for setting up and also a chance to meet non-attending partners. For food and fellowship we have a potluck meal at each Meeting.

One Sunday is a regular Meeting for Worship beginning with about 20 min. of singing. The Meetings for Worship have a good balance of silence and shared ponderings. Our singing is sometimes accompanied with an instrument but is often a capella. Songs are chosen ad hoc and spontaneously from the FGC hymn book and a songbook that our group has assembled from various sources. What a blessing to be able to sing enthusiastically from the heart!

The other is a discussion Meeting, often in a worship sharing format on a topic suggested by the host family for that month. We find the informal discussions over meals, as well as the formal discussions, spiritually meaningful. A few of last year's topics of discussion have been:

- 1) membership: our past experiences and its meaning within Quakerism;
- 2) attending a presentation in Kitchener by Matthew Legge on his new book *Are We Done Fighting?*;
- 3) meditation: our experiences of this, of not thinking but simply being aware without analyzing;
- 4) the format of our discussions. Is a worship-sharing format satisfactory for all? What other options might be explored?

As far as community involvement goes, our worship group has had one vigil re: the proposed DGR (deep geological repository) in South Bruce County but for the most part, mainly due to the distances between us, our actions have been more of an individual nature. These have included advocating for regenerative organic farming, advocating against deep geological repositories for radioactive waste, cooking and delivering meals to various isolated neighbours, supporting teachers fighting to preserve quality education, supporting one of our members who was a candidate in the last federal election, volunteer gardening for a seniors' group residence and for a community garden that supplies a local food bank with vegetables, volunteering with a county hospice, caring for aging parents and grandchildren, and coordinating a meal for seniors each month, among other things.

The Meetings, meals, and fellowship provide a place of spiritual nurture and personal support to sort out the perplexities of life and follow our various leadings.

MONTREAL MONTHLY MEETING

During 2019 the numbers attending Montreal Meeting have remained steady. On a Sunday, when we meet at the Greene Centre we have regularly had 20 people or more, and at our Midweek Meeting for Worship at McGill University we have had up to 10 people. We continue to welcome visitors to Montreal regularly to join us for Worship and we are delighted to have had some local people join us and become part of our community. We have a programme of reading from *Advices and Queries* in Meeting for Worship monthly as advised in *Faith and Practice*.

We enjoy a social time after Meeting for Worship when we have refreshments and most of those attending stay for this. It has enabled us to strengthen friendship and our sense of community. We now have a potluck lunch four times a year.

Another regular activity is our singing potluck supper. This is held in a different Friend's home each month and is open to anyone who is interested. We had a special one at Christmas time when over 20 people attended and while we enjoyed each other's company some sang carols gustily.

We welcomed one Friend into membership and also had one Friend transfer their membership in from another Meeting. Sadly one long term attender, Shirley Steele, died.

Ministry and Council meet regularly and had a day together at a member's home out of Montreal. It was a fruitful time together and we hope to repeat the experience. Ministry and Counsel has also maintained a rota of Greeters on a Sunday morning which we feel is important to make people feel welcomed.

We had an Art Retreat day which about eight Friends attended, working on individual projects together.

Once a month we have a session after Meeting for Worship to discuss topics of interest and Quaker themes.

A very well attended session was about gender identity and we all felt we learned a lot about this subject. There was a very lively discussion after the talk when many present joined in.

In June we repeated our Meeting Picnic at Angrignon Park. Again we had a lovely day. The weather was good and we had a good turnout. A thoroughly enjoyable time was had by all.

At the beginning of June Regional Gathering was held in Ottawa. A group of eight from Montreal attended and were very happy to meet with other Friends from the region. The subject was Simplicity.

Our group interested in Refugees and Indigenous people continues to meet and consider direct action. Indigenous issues in particular have received increased attention from our meeting lately, with plans to invite Jennifer Preston to speak and to write our own land acknowledgement. Our meeting also had extensive discernment around Loi 21, and how the meeting should best respond to Quebec banning religious symbols and headwear for public employees and teachers.

We've heard updates from a working group and many of us wear buttons.

We had a visit from Marian Baker, a Friend from New Hampshire, who works with women's groups in Africa. She was making contact with Congolese Friends in Montreal and spent some time with us telling us about her inspiring work. We continue to be in touch with her and hope to see her again in 2020.

We are trying to have a regular First Day School. Two Friends have produced an outline lesson plan which could be used with a variety of stories and another Friend has provided materials for children to use. We are trying to find the best way forward with this.

We are blessed to have a wide age range of people attending our Meeting who are committed to Montreal Monthly Meeting.

NEW BRUNSWICK MONTHLY MEETING

New Brunswick Monthly Meeting is made up of five Worship Groups and two Allowed Meetings. Each of these groups has drawn up a State of Society report as a spiritual exercise. These reports are included. As a Monthly Meeting together we are a strong and supportive community. We meet about eight times a year. Together we share responsibility for membership, ministry and council, marriages and spiritual and social concerns.

It has been almost a decade since we received a significant grant from the CYM Trustees for the purpose of holding retreats bringing everyone in our geographically dispersed meeting together for an annual get together of mutual sharing and spiritual nurture. These gatherings were so successful and meaningful that members have been insistent each year that we really want to schedule and plan for one. So, the annual retreat has become an integral part of our being together. We also participate in the Atlantic Friends Gathering and we are a part of a new Half Yearly meeting.

We continue our support of the Peskotomuhkati in their negotiations with the Federal Government for recognition as a People. They are in continuing resource negotiations and Chief Akagi expresses his profound appreciation for the prayers of the Quakers during these sometimes difficult times. In June, NBMM's retreat was held in southwestern New Brunswick to mark the Summer Solstice. We were grateful recipients of hospitality, ministry, and music from the Peskotomuhkati (Passamaquoddy) people.

We also gave support to our members who helped to provide materials for the Indigenous People protesting the development of the Sisson Ridge mine which would impact Indigenous lands and rivers.

We were so pleased to welcome three new members into fellowship during the past year. One in the PEI Allowed Meeting, one in the St John Area Worship Group and one in the Fredericton Worship Group.

KAIROS held one of their major conferences in the Atlantic region during 2019. Two of our members attended that event and became acquainted with others in the region who are peace and justice advocates.

Because of the great distances members and attenders must overcome to attend Monthly Meeting in Fredericton, the Clerks made the decision to take Monthly Meeting on the road this year. Thus, it was held on the Skutik (St. Croix) River in southwestern NB, at the Villa Madonna Retreat Centre in Saint

John, and in Charlottetown, PEI, and the Helmuth home in Woodstock, NB. The Clerks are grateful for the hospitality of those Friends.

Eastern Shore (Nova Scotia) Allowed Meeting

Although, we have only five Friends left in our Meeting, we have found creative ways to meet in Worship. We sit in our homes in Dartmouth and Mahone Bay while our other members who now live in Wiarton, Ontario do the same. They are a family of six including three children: ten, seven and 18 months. We meet at an appointed time every two weeks for thirty minutes. It is a scientific fact that when people meditate together and concentrate their thinking on love, harmony, and gratitude, etc., it is very powerful energy and spreads out for long distances. The three children ages ten, seven and 18 months sit with us. The adults suggest a topic, for example, compassion, to think about during Meeting. It is wonderful to hear the ministry of the ten and seven year olds. Of course, we cannot hear it so their Grandmother always reports the ministry of the Meeting. We learn a lot from the little children. Jesus said, *Truly, I tell you whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.* Mark 10: 13.

We send love and gratitude to all Friends in Canada and all other countries.

Fundy Friends Worship Group

Our Worship group continues to grow slowly, with two new Attenders this year, one living in St. Andrews, and one seasonal. We meet most weeks as weather and travel plans of retired members allow. Because we meet in people's homes, we have set a "quorum" of three, which we have most weeks; in general, attendance averages about 6. Once a month we have "House Church" with two other people who established an alternative to Roman Catholic Mass around the same time that our Worship Group was formed - now 20 years ago!

We really enjoy not only our worship time, but our fellowship and meal after Meeting. We've grown closer over the years and provide a strong support system for one another in our daily lives, as well as in Meeting.

In September 2019 we again had a Friends' Retreat in St. Andrews, this time at the Wesley United Church which was newly renovated and now has a Labyrinth painted on the floor. We held monthly meeting worship and business at Chiputneticook Lodge, an old lodge newly dedicated to the spirituality and culture of the Peskotomuhkati (Passamaquoddy) on the Skutik (St. Croix). The Skutik is the river where the Peskotomuhkati first met French explorers in 1604. Members of the Peskotomuhkati Nation participated in some of our activities and provided drumming and singing on Saturday night.

Fredericton Worship Group

In 2019 the Fredericton Worship Group of New Brunswick Monthly Meeting met once a month when Friends shared their homes with 10-12 members and attenders for Meeting for worship, worship sharing and socializing over coffee and snacks. This alternated with New Brunswick Monthly Meeting once a month. We are a deeply connected group who put great value on silent worship, shared values and friendship. We had one member resign this year to continue seeking through another religion. We also welcomed one new member, who has added greatly to the richness of ministry and community. Friends from our worship group gain a lot of support from each other but also when we can connect with others from our Monthly Meeting and beyond. Gatherings attended by those in our group included New

Brunswick Monthly Meeting, when it was held in Fredericton, Charlottetown (PEI Allowed Meeting), and at Villa Madonna (Saint John WG), plus Atlantic Friends Gathering, the retreat in St. Andrews, and Atlantic Half Yearly Meeting in Sackville. Each opportunity increases knowledge and allows deeper conversations about our Faith.

Prince Edward Island Allowed Meeting

The public restrictions on gathering in groups due to COVID-19, and individual “social distancing,” have put an interim stop to our Meetings for Worship in person. This year’s report was therefore drafted by the Clerk, then threshed by email by PEI Friends, and the final version submitted. Surely, like most others, we are thrown out of kilter by this unforeseen and drastic worldwide event. But it seems, throughout the wider community, to be having two particular and revealing effects: an opportunity to review our lifestyles and sift what is essential from what is not – and how badly we need to hold onto what is not essential; and an opportunity to reach out to neighbours with practical assistance, moral support, and cheerful friendliness – when before, perhaps, we might have not got around to it.

At the present time, members of our Meeting are keeping in weekly touch by email, rather than trying to hold Worship electronically, although we have the opportunity to join Friends of a worship group in NBMM in that way (as well as CFSC’s online Meeting), and several PEI Friends joined in NBMM for Business by teleconference (three meetings so far, with the added benefit of not having to brave several hours of winter driving). Most of this report, however, covers 2019 when all life seemed normal!

After a series of three experiments holding Meeting in public venues (the university, a community living complex, and a social club), we have returned to meeting in a private home. The practical convenience has won over our attempts at outreach. Worshiping in those public places did not bring new attenders to our Meeting. We are most fortunate that our “default” meetinghouse, a heritage home lovingly cared for and tastefully renovated by the Friends who own it, is easy to reach in Charlottetown. We could certainly worship in a coal mine, but surrounding beauty is decidedly a plus! We follow worship and basic business with fellowship and snacks. However, we have not been active in the wider community this past year, including taking steps to connect with First Nations as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report (and CYM/CFSC) has challenged all Friends to do.

Our members and attenders are not all geographically at close quarters, so attendance varies depending on travel distance, as well as work schedules and other commitments. Typically, we can expect five Friends to gather, but our “family” extends beyond to those who live too far away, including Friends in the USA who are in touch by email. We miss the presence of Friends unable to attend on any given Sunday because we appreciate them so much when they are with us.

In worship, we are reminded that the Presence is already and always there among us. It is only for us to both tune in to that loving Spirit and hold ourselves open to its leadings. For that, by Quaker tradition and experience, we have to wait. It is not always an easy process as we try to divest ourselves of the clutter and clatter of our day-to-day minds! Yet we do find it worth the effort, even though most of our meetings pass without vocal ministry, as that hour of worship sets the tone for us to live by.

During our most recent Meeting for Worship for Business, during which appointments were to be reviewed (Clerk, Recording Clerk, and other responsibilities), the Clerk advised the Meeting not to assume that she would be automatically willing to continue in a role she has held since this Meeting was

started as a worship group in 1991. Without a Committee of Clearness or an opportunity for direct mentoring from a more experienced clerk, she was not wholly convinced of her effectiveness. The Meeting approved a new position, Alternate Clerk, and without hesitation named our youngest member in that position. While this may lead eventually to the succession of one clerk to the other, the immediate intent is to allow the current Clerk to share some responsibilities, where possible, as well as have access to a designated Friend when discernment is called for. While the workload, for practical reasons, is not likely to change, there is some comfort in this new arrangement!

During this past winter, we again held a series of biweekly Quaker Study sessions. Subjects included Religious...Society... Friends: What do these words mean to you? Joy; The Magi; The family tree of Quakers; and Capital punishment. This last subject turned out to be large and deep! Some Friends were able to view in advance two public films on this subject, "Just Mercy" and "Clemency," and other resources included QuakerSpeak and the website of Murder Victims' Families for Human Rights. The justice system as a whole, as well as AVP (Alternatives to Violence Project), were also explored.

Within our Meeting, one Friend serves on New Brunswick MM's Ministry and Counsel, as well as on Atlantic Friends Gathering program committee and AFG Registrar, and another submits our statistical report to NBMM for inclusion in their report to CYM. Last October, we hosted NBMM for Worship for Business, when several Friends from the mainland joined us. Unfortunately, our planned review of our Allowed Meeting status (approved by New Brunswick MM in 2016) – how is it working? - what have been the benefits or drawbacks? – must of necessity be put on hold until the COVID-19 crisis is over.

In the meantime, our Facebook page is active with both local Friends and other followers, and our separate FB Quaker Study page posts advance reference documents, ideas, and thoughts for those who participate in these discussions.

While welcoming visitors to our Meeting is currently not possible, we do strongly remind travelling Friends wishing to join us for worship in the future to contact the Clerk in advance to confirm time and place. Occasional cancellations and relocations are announced on our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/pei.quakers/>. Our contact information can be found on the CYM website or by emailing the Clerk at pei-contact@quaker.ca.

Sackville Worship Group

The Sackville Worship group continues to meet on Tuesday lunchtimes during the academic year. We are fortunate to be in the Mount Allison University Chapel. This beautiful, sacred space helps us to centre into the silence.

Our group has three members of NBMM and up to twelve attenders, some of whom worship regularly and others, on occasion. The University Chaplain joins when he can.

After settling into the silence, an excerpt from Advices and Queries is often read, which can help to deepen the worship. Spoken ministry during worship is rare, but worship sharing afterwards can build a sense of community or help to support someone experiencing difficulties.

We try to foster community through a brown bag lunch once a month, occasional summer meetings, and an annual catered lunch at Christmas time.

A couple of us attend NBMM when possible. We enjoyed visiting Friends in Saint John in September and Prince Edward Island in October. Our group hosted the Atlantic Friends Half Yearly Meeting in November.

We tend to be involved individually in volunteer work in the community as we are led, covering quite a range of activities between us.

Saint John Worship Group

Our worship group made a great step forward when we began holding our meetings for worship at the Villa Madonna Retreat Centre. This welcoming and more public space has made it easier for others to join us. We meet on the second and fourth Sunday of each month. We often have eight or more in attendance of whom five are members, and the period of silent worship is deep and meaningful. This is followed by a period of worship sharing after which we gather around a table for an hour or more enjoying coffee and tea and brown bag lunches and wonderful conversation.

The pandemic has temporarily put an end to these meetings. We are initiating ways to keep connected with our spiritual community. We remain grateful for the rich experiences we have shared with our worship group and the wider community of Friends.

Woodstock-Houlton Worship Group

The Woodstock-Houlton Worship Group continues to meet every First Day (weather permitting) throughout the year, with an average of 8 members/attenders gathering together. Our Meetings for Worship are often in total reverent and refreshing silence. Those speaking out of the silence would generally qualify for the old Quaker comment after Meeting to one who had spoken: “you were well favoured.”

Four families rotate hosting Meeting once a month. After Meeting we have refreshments and once a month a Potluck meal including an hour or so of fellowship. These are the times we catch up on everyone’s news, be it sad, joyous or just interesting. Following that we discuss book chapters, articles or other materials we have all read during the week such as a series of Pendle Hill Pamphlets, a magazine article on a particular topic, or a book of interest such as *The Book of Joy* by the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu.

Our Worship Group is composed mostly of those 60 years of age and much older. One of our elderly attenders was in the hospital and then needed care at home. Several others had medical issues. Our “holding in the Light” list can be quite long at times and includes other members/attenders of New Brunswick Monthly Meeting, as are our prayers of thankfulness as these issues are successfully remedied.

Many of our members have continued the ecumenical work that has been described in previous SOS Reports. Additional concerns of justice issues and climate change rise up and are shared around for additional work that needs to be done. Members who engage in this work feel supported by the meeting.

Addendum: As this State of Society report is written, the border between Houlton, Maine and Woodstock, NB is closed due to the global pandemic involving the COVID-19 Coronavirus. We are staying in touch with fellow Quakers via e-mail, Meeting for Worship via phone conference calls, and personal calls to check-up on each other. We are now holding the whole world in the Light.

OTTAWA MONTHLY MEETING

Ottawa Monthly Meeting (OMM) comprises Friends in the Ottawa area and also the St. Lawrence Valley Friends' Meeting in Potsdam, upstate New York. We did not see much of Potsdam Friends this past year. The busy pace of our lives, aging and distance all reduced visitation and made the two groups relatively independent of each other.

In 2019 OMM gained two new members by transfer and lost three Friends by death. We are grateful for the new voices added to our Meeting and recall with great tenderness the loss of Friends whose lives were examples of focused and hopeful action. We had 75 active Members and 26 active attenders; on average 32 Friends and attenders worshipped with us on First Day. We were heartened by the increased number of young adults in attendance. On average 16 Friends attended our Business Meetings. We rejoiced in the presence of one lively toddler who regularly attends our meetings for worship. We continue to hope that our Children's Meeting will grow.

During Sunday morning worship, vocal ministry was given with somewhat less frequency, but perhaps more thoughtfully, than in the past. This was recognized as a strength, and silent worship remains the hearth of our spiritual home. We found that Queries read during Meeting for Worship and readings before Business Meetings provided welcome grounding. We tried a new approach to announcements in order to preserve the sense of worship and valued having the doorkeeper read the announcements rather than individual Friends speaking to their causes. Both worship and business strengthened people's daily lives. There was a healthy push and pull between grounding our actions in our faith and expressing our faith in our actions, both needing the other to thrive. Our period of Afterword/Joys and Sorrows continued as a way for Friends to enter the beloved Community with personal ministry and to support the depth of the preceding Silence. It provided a place for the more reticent to speak about life-changing events in their lives.

Many Friends and new active attenders mentioned that committee work is enriching and a way to be listened to and to be drawn into the life of the Meeting. We were more and more aware of sustaining our welcome to new attenders and need to continue this intention. Welcoming at the door is just the beginning.

With joy and relief, over three years after submitting our first sponsorship application, we welcomed our Syrian refugee family of six on May 23th, 2019 from Istanbul. Our newcomers have all settled in well to their new life, and along with local relatives and people from a neighbourhood group, many members of the Meeting have shared in the variety of responsibilities, building connections and loving support.

Two morning retreats, hosted by Ministry and Counsel (M&C), provided an extended time to reflect on central theological ideas and we looked at readings centred around the themes of Hope and Authority. On Sunday mornings, before Meeting for Worship, we made further space for Christian contemplation and Friendly Bible Study. Many who attended found these sessions gave focussed preparation for Worship and lasting support during the week.

Adult Religious Education and Outreach hosted two coffee houses that were open to the community. Our annual non-residential retreat was attended by 44 people. With sessions led by those attending, we

enjoyed the theme of “Mending” which invited our creativity and optimism, as well as considerations of sustainability, and included music, history, art, theatre, writing, relationship skills, poetry, and darning, impermanence, and the unique beauty of repairs. Apropos of “mending”, we began basement renovations in order to open up the space, gain more accessible storage, create a laundry area and above all ameliorate a mould problem!

The Meeting continued to support the emotional and spiritual health of couples through the ministry of Couple Enrichment. Couple Enrichment serves both Quaker and non-Quaker couples.

The Waters of Reconciliation Series developed by members of our Peace and Social Concerns Committee continued in 2019. As a wonderful adjunct to celebrate the sacred in water, we engaged with local action to eliminate the use and sale of bottled water in Ottawa. We also had a continuing concern for the expansion of pipelines and use of fossil fuels. We protested weapons production and sales (CANSEC) and participated in the annual commemoration for the victims of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We supported Bill C-262 in the Senate and were disappointed when it failed to pass. We continued to listen to Indigenous voices as individuals and as a Meeting. Members of the meeting were active in support of human rights in Central and Latin America, specifically El Salvador and Venezuela.

Friends expressed a desire for more education in both Quaker process and history. We felt that the role of all religious and spiritual expressions needs loving understanding, and that being Friends together is the first and most important step. A number of Friends carried an active concern to make the Meeting a place where people of diverse theological and cultural traditions could experience being cherished members of our community. We ask ourselves if we want to honour diversity how do we become consistent and intentional in its care and tenderness? How do we cultivate inclusiveness?

Did we, as Ottawa Friends, become less discerning in the myriad local and global issues we faced? This question creatively exercised us, as we recognized the need to knit together our inward and outward expressions of spirituality. We need more work to understand that leadings to uphold Quaker process and engagement with social justice actions are expressions of the same energy and spring from the same Spirit. As a Friend in Meeting reminded us, “We are not called to be successful. We are called to be faithful.”

We are, on the whole, a caring meeting, providing support to the body and its individual members as best we are able. At times deep discussion arose in meeting for business, and we were not always able to come to unity. How can we open a space in our meetings for people to speak freely and plainly without fear of dividing the meeting?

Some of our members and attenders told us about feeling alienated or isolated from the main life of the meeting. M&C listened carefully and considered ways to reach out to these and all Friends. We continue to seek "the peace which passeth all understanding" in our relationships with each other. We trust that OMM is not alone in this challenge, and our hope is that we might learn from each other and the Quaker community across the country.

St. Lawrence Valley Friends Allowed Meeting continued to meet for unprogrammed worship on Sunday evenings at 5:00 pm in the Reading Room of the Christian Science Church in Potsdam. They followed their worship with a simple potluck supper for fellowship. As one member puts it, we find ourselves “smaller (in number) and older.”

PELHAM EXECUTIVE MEETING

Quality of worship and ministry

We acknowledge that we have some difficulty focusing and being open to the Light. We remember the advice of a now-departed elder who advised to say only one thing in Meeting. Following the time of worship we continue with afterthoughts, which in our experience helps to keep us focused on discerning the Light.

We recognize we are all led in different ways and all of us follow different paths, but share the desire to reach the same goal: to reveal the “truth in the inward parts” as is expressed in *Psalms 51:6*: “Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.” We hold this “Inward truth” to be what is essential.

Efforts to foster spiritual growth

We acknowledge the role which emotional honesty in Meeting and worship sharing plays in helping our spiritual growth. We’ve identified four areas in which we can improve our experience of worship, as well as providing opportunities to foster spiritual growth.

First, we acknowledge that only a few people carry the organizational duties of the Meeting and that is a weakness. We can share the load more equally.

Second, attenders have requested a more conscious direction to foster spiritual growth. We have begun the practice of sharing one of the Advices and Queries each Meeting. This is especially important for newcomers. We have undertaken to prepare a handout specifically tailored to Niagara Quakers. This could also be useful as a form of outreach.

We continue to reflect upon whether or not we need a more focused program of Quaker education.

Third, we acknowledge that pastoral care in our meeting is not organized. Our public support of each other through attendance at each other’s events is very strong. And if any of us had a dire emergency, or a celebration, we would be there as individuals and as a community. However, we may need to create a system to reach out more consciously to each other on a regular basis.

Fourth, many of us miss the opportunity to share in song and dance as an expression of our spirituality. We have agreed to try to integrate music and dance into our time together.

Stand taken on Friends’ principles

We have publicly supported the right of the Six Nations (Haudenosaunee) to hunt deer in the Short Hills Provincial Park. We are active partners in the Bridge of Hope collective to sponsor refugee families from Syria and support them as they adjust to life in Canada. The Meeting also supports individuals in

their community activities, including attendance at XR (eXtinction Rebellion) meetings, the Brock University Social Justice Symposium, the Climate strike rally, as well as efforts that support anti-racism, equity, and inclusion at every level of society. We affirm our concern for marginalized populations through support of the Indigenous-led street outreach efforts of the Bear Clan Patrol.

Personal and family relations

As Friends, we are friends. We find each other's earnestness enjoyable, but it can be exhausting. This prompts us to ask: Are we having enough fun? We agree that, in our Quaker practice, no part of our lives should be excluded. On balance, a bit of what a Friend fancies, does a Friend good.

Last year, we were honoured to attend a wedding between two of our Friends. It was a joyful time. We remind ourselves that celebrations, as well as emergencies and times of action on our stand on Friends' principles, are times to be shared by the Meeting.

Relations with community and other religious groups

Our Meeting is involved in a number of community endeavours with other religious groups.

One member convened a clergy lunch of downtown clergy with Anglican, United, and a community church being represented. All of the clergy were involved in attending to the needs of the marginalized population in the downtown core, but were not talking to each other about their ministry. Our member offered a series of lunch meetings so they could do so. Our Meeting's efforts to serve vulnerable members of the community through programs like Out of the Cold are often entwined with the efforts of other faith communities.

In addition, our Meeting plays a role in Bridge of Hope and, through that relationship, Friends from our meeting are tutoring recently-arrived Syrians in English. This effort joins our Meeting with the Masjid Al Noor Mosque and Grace Mennonite Church, both in St. Catharines, and Trinity United Church in Beamsville.

Members and attenders serve as volunteers with Hospice Niagara, Out of the Cold, Positive Living Niagara, Ubuntu, and Linhaven Family Council.

Participation in general activities of Friends

Members of our meeting are involved in CYM and Pelham Half-Yearly Meeting to various degrees. Prior to its cancellation, one member had agreed to attend representative meeting of CYM. We also have a member who serves on the executive of Camp NeeKauNis Committee. Another member serves on the Canadian Friends Service Committee Finance Committee. In addition, one member serves as a chaplain in the local hospice.

It is not our practice to ask any member or attender for funds directly. One should do what one is led to do. Our Meeting is in a good financial position, as we do not have a Meeting House to support. We donate yearly to the Niagara Artists' Centre (NAC), which hosts our twice-monthly Meetings. Our largest financial obligation is to maintain our cemetery in Pelham. In addition, we make annual donations to CYM, CFSC and support our commitment to Bridge of Hope.

PETERBOROUGH MONTHLY MEETING

Our weekly Meeting for Worship continues to be our spiritual centre. The quality of silence and vocal ministry (when it comes) are satisfying and nourishing. Many welcome this opportunity for stillness in their lives. We appreciate afterthoughts and reflections following meeting and conversations during our teatimes and potlucks as we continue to grow in community. We continue to be enriched by the contributions of several new attenders. One new Young Friend was welcomed into membership.

Teaching and discovery continue to be important to our meeting: our monthly discussions on First Sunday, two monthly mid-week meetings for worship sharing at a local retirement home, and our World Religions study group continue to enrich us spiritually.

We offer a children's program which includes the monthly Earthcare program. The children's report after EarthCare brings joy to the meeting. In the fall we had a wonderful time at our second talent sharing event (olio), which included adults and children.

The meeting continues to promote the local Peace Council, which holds a regular monthly peace vigil. We continue to use an Indigenous land acknowledgement at our meetings for worship for business. We supported the second Reconciliation Day held in Peterborough.

Other outreach activities included: sponsoring and introducing a film at the Reframe Film Festival; prison visitation at Warkworth Institution by one member; attendance at the multi-faith Abraham Festival; participation in an ecumenical group called "Many Windows One Light".

We sent a delegate to Representative Meeting. Various members attended the St. Lawrence Regional Gathering, CYM in Winnipeg, and the Carry on Discovery (COD) camp at Camp NeeKauNis. One member serves on the Camp NeeKauNis committee and one member is on the Publications and Communications Committee.

We have a monthly Friendly movie night at one member's home. In summer we had a Meeting for Worship and picnic at the local zoo. One member sponsored a game night in their home.

SAANICH PENINSULA MONTHLY MEETING

Our small Meeting continues to meet each First Day at the Central Saanich Senior Services Society Building, Brentwood Bay. For the month of August, we forgo meeting at our rental space and hold rotating home-based meetings.

We continue to value our Meeting as a place and time for worship, personal and collective discernment and mutual aid. Following Meeting for Worship, we share "afterthoughts" and a round-robin check-in and enjoy the enhancement of our fellowship by these activities. A pot-luck refreshment time follows. The ties of friendship both in Meeting and outside of Meeting are of importance to us.

Approximately monthly we have a worship sharing following shared lunch. Our topics most often arise from recent ministry and afterthought sharings.

We contribute as a Meeting to several local charities, and individual Friends support many causes. In 2019, we completed a detailed review and renewal of our contribution budgets as a meeting.

A significant corporate topic for our meeting was a discussion of the importance of Canadian Yearly Meeting and the annual gathering to us as individuals and collectively. This work was in response to efforts to review the structures and organizational health of CYM.

Our average attendance is around ten; our average age somewhere in the 70s. We recognize the limitations of our resources in numbers and energy for outreach locally and involvement with the larger Canadian Quaker community.

In December, our oldest Friend (by calendar years) and one of the original members of Saanich Peninsula MM, came to the end of her life.

There have been no other changes in membership; we welcome one new attender. We hosted an Open House for World Quaker Day in October which created a meaningful day of fellowship. We maintain a simple website to assist visitors and seekers to find us.

SASKATOON MONTHLY MEETING

We are a small Meeting but rich in Spirit. Our attendance numbers are getting smaller as health concerns, elder and spousal care, and volunteer commitments take up Friends' energy. Our ministry to each other includes checking in and showing concern for each other's lives.

TORONTO MONTHLY MEETING

*The Meeting Community is that place where each of us is supported in the life of the Spirit. More than a place or a group of people, it is a state of possibility and an experience of community that underlies our religious life together.*¹

There were more younger members and attenders than usual at our worship-sharing session on the State of Society. The liveliness and thoughtfulness of their contributions clarified our knowledge of the vital need to share Quaker values across generations. All spoke to the importance of our shared spiritual life, and the crying need for spiritual values in an increasingly secular wider world. One Young Friend spoke of Friends House as the pillar of her life. The importance of our meeting community in fostering these values came through loud and clear in every aspect of our discussions.

Discussion of the nuts and bolts structure of our Monthly Meeting focussed on the importance of Young Friends and Friends House in maintaining a place where our spiritual lives are supported and encouraged. A TMM Committee Fair invited participation in the work of our committees. Toronto Meeting has a strong foundation in the hard work done by its standing committees, the trustees, and the members of our staff. The reality of current legal requirements and the work of the Sexual Abuse and Harassment Committee have led us to undertake legal preparations for incorporation. Advances in

¹ "Introduction" to chapter 3, "The Meeting Community, p. 70, in *Canadian Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice*

communication have led to an effort to improve technology and processes for TMM, and the use of Twitter to improve intergenerational communication.

Such work might not be seen as spiritual, but within Friends House our spiritual values find a base for its physical existence that allows the spirit to flourish in our Meeting and in the wider community. Moreover, such work is performed as service that supports our deep recognition of the Light within us all. We benefit from the loving maintenance of the beautiful Meeting Room and the building itself. We are striving to develop a meaningful acknowledgement of the land on which Friends House stands and the nations who lived here before us.

An increase in spiritual sharing could help us all, but is especially important for younger members who seek spiritual support. In today's society many young people have little time, and they lack the ongoing employment and sustained support that previous generations could rely upon. In our meeting community they might hope to learn about strongly held spiritual values as they come to know older Friends. More intergenerational opportunities for learning from each other will help the spiritual growth of us all.

Suggestions include mentoring positions for Young Friends on our committees, and we might organize spiritually-oriented talks after Meeting for Worship. A recent meeting about silence, facilitated by a younger member, contributed to the greater wellbeing of all. At a time when many of us are aging, younger members seek a closer mentoring relationship with older Friends. We need to learn what they wish for and discover how it can be provided.

The Community Nights, held once a month with a potluck supper, cooperative board games, and other activities, have enlarged our intergenerational community. Our Children's Program, which meets on Sunday mornings, is supported by the Young Friends Program Committee and a paid staff member, allowing parents to attend Meeting for Worship. We share our delight when the children join our shared worship for the last few minutes. Even younger members are learning Quaker values and traditions, and we enjoy shaking hands with each other!

Expanding the Visiting Committee might help us to extend our sense of community, individual to individual. The size of the city and the busyness of our members often distracts us from sharing time with one another, as we focus much of our attention on committee work and minute writing. Could we lay down some committees and procedures to make time for the pleasure of company we are often too busy to share.

Attendance at Sunday Meeting for Worship has recently increased, yet many of these Seekers fail to return. Why? Undoubtedly our silence does not appeal to all, even among Friends. We could consider other ways to draw in newcomers. New attenders may be seeking spiritual companionship, and while a spiritual way of life can be found through committee work, this is certainly not obvious at first glance. Perhaps we should post a notice on the Meeting Room door reading "Caution! Being here may change you."

While numbers are only one of our concerns, our continuation as a Monthly Meeting requires support from many. The importance of spirituality in our lives is reflected by the use of Friends House for a wide variety of community groups and activities. Do the people who come to events at the House realise why we support them? Could we find a new way to help them, some of whom are young, to understand

Friends values and testimonies? Canadian Quakers no longer proselytise as they did in Fox's day, but there are ways of linking the secular and spiritual that we have failed to share. A highly successful Quaker Quest meeting some years ago had no follow-up.

We are aware of our lack of diversity. Our history of openness to gender diversity should lead to increased participation by the LGBTQ+ community, but we remain largely white in a city of increasing racial diversity. How can we change this? We need to expand our community, but it seems we are not good at offering spiritual sharing to each other and to the wider community of Toronto.

TMM has joined the Coalition of Queering Christian Voices.² There is also a Bible study group, and monthly meetings for singing. Further sessions on Quaker practice will supplement those already underway on Quaker history. Those seeking inner and outer peace share concerns about poverty, homelessness, and peace.

We have temporarily laid down the Peace and Social Action Committee, but individual friends continue many of these activities. Our Statement on Social Justice requires meaningful follow-up, but we have welcomed our third sponsored refugee family. Friends and attenders are involved in global issues. TMM participated in Climate Action Week and Friends were involved in other climate-related events that drew young people to meetings held at Friends House. The Kitchen Table Climate Conversation project has also brought Seekers, enhancing outreach to a wider church community through KAIROS.

Midweek Meeting for Worship and Worship Groups

Midweek Meeting for Worship is held at Friends House on Wednesday evenings. A period of about 45 minutes of silent worship is followed by a sharing of "afterthoughts" amongst some four to eleven attenders, answering to varying pronouns, whose increasing mutual trust is leading to a shared ownership of the Meeting. There is a lot of love there. This small and less formal gathering is a good introduction to our Sunday Meeting for Worship, which some also now attend.

The **Downtown Worship Group** has met sporadically on the second Wednesday of the month at 2:00 pm in Friends House. Because the group is aging, ill health continues to cause cancellations. Although only three regular members of the original larger group remain, our meetings have provided important spiritual support that has been an ongoing source of comfort and sustenance to us all, and we wish to continue. We value the time we are able to spend together in shared worship, discussion, and tender concern for one another.

The **West End Worship Group** meets in members' homes on the first Sunday of the month. Meetings are often silent, with time afterwards sharing events of the past month - joys and sorrows. Social time over light refreshments allows us to deepen friendships and to discuss Quakerly concerns.

VANCOUVER MONTHLY MEETING

The way a Meeting of Friends functions has become increasingly difficult to harmonize with the demands of life in the world around us. The daily time constraints of work, study and family take many of Friends' energy, especially of those in their middle years, who otherwise might be best equipped to

² This group was formerly known as the National Consultation on Affirming Ministries.

deal with the practical aspects of the needs of the Meeting. ‘Spare’ time is hard to come by! Yet Vancouver Meeting has been blessed in being able to find enough Friends who are able and willing to give of their resources and to serve our community, allowing it to function well. We are mindful that we not take that work for granted and to try and spread the load as much as possible.

Friends at Vancouver Meeting have given much of themselves to our community this year. We have had many moments of open sharing of our spirituality and emotional lives. We have discerned together on activist leadings, have come together for movie nights and Friendly meals, were honest and brave confronting challenging issues within the meeting, have mourned losses collectively, and have celebrated together when we’ve experienced individual joy.

Vancouver Monthly Meeting meets in the heart of the traditional ancestral and unceded territory of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) & səliłwətaʔl (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples. Our meetinghouse is located near the site of čəsnaʔəm, an ancient village and burial site of the Musqueam Nation, dating back over 4,000 years. This year, our Reconciliation Committee has been active in supporting ongoing learning to decolonize, and to build relationships and work in solidarity with First Nations on truth and reconciliation. Over the past year we have convened an experiential workshop on the Indian Residential School experience (March 2019). We also held a successful fundraiser for the Heiltsuk First Nation to support their legal action for accountability in the Nathan E. Stewart oil spill on their territory. Finally, we have continued to protest the construction of the Trans Mountain Pipeline in solidarity with the Tsleil-Waututh Nation and offer Earth Witness Worship at the protest site.

As well as those who work with the Reconciliation Committee, many Friends are actively engaged in working towards lessening the many forms of injustice, conflict and environmental destruction that beset the world around us. Many of us (some carrying the Quaker banner) joined to walk with hundreds and thousands of youth in Vancouver on a day of climate action. We are moved by the small Swedish teen woman who is speaking truth to those powerful few who preserve “business as usual” rather than acting on the current Climate Emergency. Other friends have continued to work tirelessly on behalf of those in occupied Palestine, on issues regarding immigration, and on other issues of faith and social equity.

Such work takes its toll in energy, spiritual energy in particular, which needs to be replenished by the restorative support and nurture to be found in the life of the Meeting—in worship, sharing and fellowship and our intention to create a space of quiet peace and loving understanding. This can be damaged by troubling behaviour. This year our Meeting has had open dialogue on right behavior and maintaining healthy personal boundaries and increasing spiritual resilience. We are collectively discerning the right balance between the promptings of love on the one hand and truth on the other and hearing the voice of our Inward Teacher to guide us to a renewed sense of trust and safety amongst us.

In 2019 we saddened by the illness and loss of a faithful older Friend who had worshiped with us every Sunday since the 1960s. Despite his constant gentle presence, none of us knew him very well. He struggled with mental illness and in later life, with serious disease, but maintained a positive spirit, offered a ready smile and greeting and provided comfort in his steadfastness. We have also lost a midlife Friend, not recently very active, but who previously was important to the life of the Meeting. Each of these Memorials allowed for reflection and love.

A Midweek Meeting for Worship has been attended by Friends in East Vancouver over the year. The gathering fills a much needed space for a committed small group of friends who prefer the intimacy of home based worship. Typically 4 or 5 attend each week from a rotation of 10 or 12. Friends light a candle, drink some tea and centre. After worship the group typically goes off without lengthy socializing, which suits those who participate.

The North Burnaby Worship Group at Cranberry Commons has continued to meet on the fourth Sunday of every month. It has become the venue for offered First Day School, since many children attend at this location.

Our Meetings for Worship continue to be times of blessed stillness, with occasional spoken ministry that gathers us together. New attenders have expressed their appreciation for this gift.

VANCOUVER ISLAND MONTHLY MEETING

Vancouver Island Monthly Meeting is thriving and strong. Our community in Victoria is very active, and F/friends in Mid-Island Allowed Meeting, which operates under the umbrella of Vancouver Island Monthly Meeting, is small but steady.

In Victoria the Meeting for Worship and the Meeting for Worship for Business both have a dedicated group of attenders, F/friends, newcomers uniting in loving fellowship and seeking the Spirit as deeply as possible. We have active Wednesday and Sunday Meetings for Worship.

Monthly we hold a worship sharing group called Hearts and Minds Prepared with a strong group of F/friends meeting in the hour before Meeting for Worship, offering vital spiritual preparation for Worship. Our Meeting House underwent renovation to the kitchen, and work continues on the back external staircase and deck, improving safety and accessibility to our inviting garden.

In our Meetings for Business for Worship we frequently sought the guidance of Ministry and Counsel and the Clerk's committee to help us work in ways that deepened our experience of finding unity as we dealt with more difficult issues. One of these was Membership. Our work revealed wounds that needed tender healing, quite differing expectations for the roles and responsibilities of members and long-time attenders, and some glaring gaps in our records. In the process we reached clear unity that participation in 'weighty' committees such as Ministry and Counsel and finance depended, not on Membership, but gifts and committed participation in the life of our Meeting. We are aware that, despite much being written about Membership, it is an issue other Meetings within Canadian Yearly Meeting may be interested in looking at together as we experience our need to adapt to change.

There have been significant changes in those worshipping at Mid-Island Allowed Meeting, with long-standing Friends dying or leaving through illness and being replaced by newcomers, leaving the numbers attending Meetings for Worship much the same as before. Friends from Victoria travel to Nanaimo twice a year for fellowship and worship sharing, and as appropriate, shared Worship for Business. We also worked together to create a new shared website that includes both locations and hope this will serve as a strong beacon for people seeking to find F/friends in this part of Vancouver Island. We greatly value this time of loving connection together and have felt the mutual benefits of sustained commitment while a very small meeting regrows.

The number of Friends residing on Gabriola Island has increased, and there is now a small group of Friends who for the most part worship together there as a house-group.

As part of outreach, we assisted F/friends on Salt Spring Island to hold their first Quaker Meeting. It too was an enriching experience and our connection remains, though their primary relationship is with Cowichan Valley Monthly Meeting.

Based on past successful mini retreats, we held a spring retreat at Mary Lake Nature Center which was very well attended by F/friends from all Vancouver Island Meetings as well as Gulf Island F/friends, some of them isolated Friends. We loved this mostly unstructured experience in nature with each other, including many children.

In the past year, we have been travelling together through an amazing Spirit-led journey together to better understand reconciliation and the right use of Territorial Acknowledgments for our community in Victoria. The journey has at times been very painful and we have needed to schedule a series of worship-sharing meetings so that we might listen and learn more deeply from one another. It has not been easy to reconcile some of the profound differences that separate us, as we seek out unity and find the common holding spot of love and tenderness for each other. We recently found our common ground together in the value of silence and shared worship before our business meeting, and at the start of public events that we hold. We seek the ongoing light of revelation to bring us to a loving understanding of what reconciliation means for each individual in the Meeting. We are grateful for CYM's guidance to focus on reconciliation and we are blessed to have such a strong fellowship. Our commitment to Quaker practice and processes deepens each time we face a challenge together.

We are grateful for the continued blessings of our Meeting.

WINNIPEG MONTHLY MEETING

At its best, a Quaker Meeting is not just a collection of individual seekers, but a community of faith, a covenant community knit together by our common seeking of God. We are like spokes on a wheel: as we draw closer to our centre in God, we also draw closer to each other. And as Douglas Steere has reminded us, "to come near to God is to change".

—Thomas Gates, Canadian Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice

At the close of Meeting for Worship at the end of the year, we are holding hands as though we are concluding a wild circle dance, and in a sense that is what the whole of 2019 was. Vibrant and active all year long we were running to keep up with our leadings, explorations and new projects - the storm before the calm. At the turning of the year Ellen Judd and later Anna Hildebrandt were joyfully welcomed into membership, and then in May, Dorothy Mae Hildebrandt was born into the family of Anna, Kelvin and Isabelle, and welcomed to our Meeting Family in a gathering near Mt. Nebo, Manitoba.

The Religious Education sessions were spiritually enriching and encouraged greater intimacy among Friends as we were encouraged to know one another in those things that are Eternal. Ministry and Counsel was involved in supporting and working with Religious Education Committee to foster spiritual growth, focusing on an understanding of worship as the foundation of everything we do as Friends.

We tested holding Meeting at Old Grace Housing Co-op for four weeks and discerned we should stay where we are, seeking to bring the good things we enjoyed at old Grace into our current location. We supported affordable housing by fundraising for affordable, accessible housing at Old Grace housing coop.

Our Peace and Social Action Committee, in partnership with Epiphany Indigenous Anglican Church and Kairos, put on an uplifting benefit concert to raise funds for Music for Life, to facilitate music lessons and summer music camps for youth in Cross Lake, Manitoba, and in Winnipeg. We endorsed NoWar2020: Divest from CANSEC. July and August were full of preparing for and participating in Canadian Yearly Meeting, held at Canadian Mennonite University here in Winnipeg, August 3 to 10. Young Adult Friends really connected during CYM and have maintained and increased those ties through the year.

We worked with Mennonite Central Committee and the United Church of Canada on the annual *We are All Treaty People Celebration* at the Forks, which was well attended and itself wonderfully busy. We affirmed our support for the Climate Action Strike on September 27, led by Manitoba Youth for Climate Action, marched with our Quaker banner, endorsed their seven demands and participated in a multi-faith service held before the strike.

Keeping track of who to pass the banner around to every week became a relay—from our usual participation in the Pride March to Hiroshima Day to Peace March to Labour Day Parade, which started at the new 1919 Winnipeg General Strike Toppled Trolley Sculpture. Some of us organized and attended the weekend event *Queer and Faithful*, in support of LGBTQ2SIA+ Black, Indigenous, Asian and all People of Colour. Winnipeg Meeting is committed to a broad understanding of who “we” are. We welcome opportunities to reflect on what/who is meant when the pronoun “we” is used, and to be reminded that all are conduits of transformative spiritual nourishment. We recognize that we as Friends are impacted by structural heterosexism and structural racism, and continue working towards the dismantling of all ‘isms’ and towards wholeness in community.

In October we struck a new Winnipeg Monthly Meeting Committee on Earth Care and Climate Action, and donated funds to support a series of Suicide Prevention Workshops and to support local activists working for decolonization, reconciliation and prison abolition. Several members and attenders began meeting for “Potluck Supper and Knitting Bee” to make scarves, mitts, hats and head-warmers for the Bear Clan to give out to folks who are unhoused and others in need of warmth.

Our Climate Change Theatre Action group presented a thoughtful theatre piece on discernment and leadings to best serve the world, which was enjoyed during our potluck. Friends challenged local policies that are further marginalizing the marginalized through organizing the *Millennium for All* actions and songs. We hosted facilitators from the Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC) and appreciated their well-attended workshop on Prison Reform. Individual members of the Meeting carry on the work of supporting those in prison and working on reform and abolition.

The busy newness was balanced by remembering with thankfulness, and lamenting also. We appreciated hosting Tom Findley's memorial Meeting which brought together our grieving Meeting with f/Friends from earlier times of connection in Tom's life. Many in our Meeting experienced the deaths of their close family members; Ruth's sister, Zaley's father and grandmother, Cate's father, Janet's niece. Eric Leach suffered a fall and broke many bones. Support from the Meeting came in the form of presents, presence and prescience; delivered food, attendance at funerals, and holding in the Light.

We increased our use of Committees of Care to support Friends under concern, in times of transition, struggle and conflict. Friends desire more conversation and guidance on integrity and health in relationships. More people have felt that they could ask for help in conflict situations or in difficult times. How do we support one another? How do we offer growth and healing to people in times of struggle?

We laid down our Many Voices One World committee, and several members attended a beautiful closing event to this project involving the creative work of hundreds of children. We mourned the failure in the Canadian Senate of Bill C 262, an act to ensure the laws of Canada are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and contributed funds to a public event for people to celebrate and commemorate the work done so far and to gather energy to continue to commit to the work ahead. Elders, government representatives, and different religious groups rededicated themselves at Oodena Circle, carrying away stones as reminders to work for continuing dedication and action for this justice turning.

As fast as the wind of the Spirit pushed through us this year it turned the windmill lifting up the water from the deepest well. We hardly noticed our feet weren't touching the floor we were so steadily pressed against the wall.

YARMOUTH MONTHLY MEETING

We hold Meeting for Worship on Sundays from 11 to 12 in the same Meetinghouse that has served the community of Sparta and area for over 150 years. Some Friends who cannot attend due to health concerns join us in silent worship from their homes at the same time. Although they remain at home, we know they are with us in spirit; this enriches the worship experience for all. Friends often express their deeply-held gratitude for all that defines our Meeting - the adults, young and old, the children, the building itself and its lovely, natural surroundings. Attendance varies depending on the season and the weather from five to twenty. Several active members moved away during the past year, and they are missed. First Day school is held during Meeting for Worship. We have two children who attend occasionally. Immediately following the first Sunday of each month Friends gather for a potluck meal. This is well-attended and provides us with a chance to catch up with each other. There's always lots of talk and plenty of laughter.

Ministry and Counsel meets on a regular basis. We continue to choose one query or advice to be read near the beginning of every Meeting for Worship held during that month. This query or advice also appears in our monthly newsletter. A query or advice provides us with touchstones or starting points for reflection. Hearing them read aloud helps us engage our minds and hearts in a process that we hope will

create openings to the leadings of the Spirit within us, and sometimes speak to our personal needs, or the needs of the community. Vocal ministry is a welcome part of meeting for worship.

A study group met weekly during the winter months at a Friends' home to read and discuss Richard Rohr's book, *The Universal Christ*. Different authors penned parts of each chapter which explores philosophies both modern and historic. We were intrigued and had surprising similarities of thought with some writers of other faiths when sharing our understandings of Christ, the man. Each participant chose a chapter, read it in advance and contemplated its meaning before meeting to read aloud and discuss as a group. This simple act of sharing a piece of writing brought us closer together. Although the fellowship and tea was always warm some of the heady topics were challenging - some in a good way others not so much. We were introduced to some new-to-us concepts and our ideas were received with compassion and interest. We enjoyed this winter boost to our spirits and lots of other writings, topics and sharing were discussed. Likely this will be tried again.

One of our members, working with Kairos, is helping to carry out the Blanket Exercise in communities across Southwestern Ontario. With her help we organized a Blanket Exercise at the Meetinghouse which was a powerful and emotional learning experience for all who participated. Friends from the meeting along with interested people from nearby communities took part.

The online monthly newsletter keeps us up to date with what's happening, and offers thoughts on spirituality and prayer that Friends find uplifting. It is an essential part of our Meeting for which we are very grateful. This year we started a blog which is updated more often than our website was, and it is proving beneficial to keeping us in touch with each other, and also providing information to the community.

The Meeting continues to have a large presence in the Sparta community and beyond. Our fundraising teas and dinners serve as a meeting place for local residents who are generous and supportive. This year we organized a Chili Dinner and the Strawberry Social. We also held a Ceili as part of the end-of-year Community Assets; Learning & Living (CALL) group celebration. Growing herbs for tea-making, and making reusable beeswax coverings added to our fundraising success.

We lost a dear friend this past year - a big old maple tree to the north of the meetinghouse had to be taken down. The work involved with this project was spread out over several months and provided hours of labour for many Friends. The payoff is a woodshed filled to the ceiling with wood to warm us for years to come, not to mention our memories of working together with a common purpose.

This year climate change activism took centre stage across the entire world; Friends were involved in planning successful, local demonstrations in support of this movement. The group named CALL formed two years ago in response to the 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change continues to meet at the Meetinghouse regularly. Presentations on saving seeds, achieving zero waste, permaculture strategies, and political activism are given, and both Friends and citizens from outlying communities come together, developing understanding, knowledge and friendships to support us into the future.

The annual Lantern-Floating in memory of the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki which has been going on for over 30 years now, continues. The well-attended event is a beautiful and peaceful way to commemorate a time which must never be forgotten. Making the lanterns at a local Farmer's Market is fun, and many families come out to the lantern-floating as a result.

The sudden outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic meant that fundraising, and gatherings of all kinds were suspended, with no firm date set for resuming. Despite this difficulty Friends are using technology to hold online gatherings. It is surprisingly satisfying to be together in this new way.

The Otterville Worship, under the care of Yarmouth Monthly Meeting, has been meeting monthly for about a year and a half (including the current COVID hiatus) with a small group of dedicated attenders. We gather at Woodlawn Adult Community Centre which is a restored octagonal house once belonging to descendants of Friends. Our worship begins in the afternoon and is approximately 40 minutes, followed by discussion, sharing, questions and might involve a video, hot beverages and a laugh or two. Most people are attenders and some are members of a church but wish to worship both ways. We are discussing meeting, appropriately distanced, outdoors when the weather agrees as our meeting place is currently closed. The Otterville WG expects to continue to meet in-person when it's safe to do so.

Whether Friends are worshipping in silence, organizing an event, enjoying a potluck meal, stacking wood, singing carols in a candle-lit meetinghouse, or having an online gathering, we are truly grateful for our spiritual community. Although financial support of the meeting is important, and we have found it necessary to request that support from members and attenders, we are especially grateful for their active participation and dedicated service in our activities. In times like this when the future is uncertain, being part of an active, loving spiritual community is a gift that offers strength, and a peaceful, hopeful path through the coming years.

YONGE STREET MONTHLY MEETING

Death is but crossing the world, as Friends do the seas; they live in one another still... This is the comfort of Friends, that though they may be said to die, yet their friendship and society are, in the best sense, ever present, because immortal.

William Penn, 1693

For Yonge Street Meeting, 2019 was a year of great loss, as four dear members of the meeting died. The memorial meetings enabled us to be drawn together spiritually. As the Penn quotation describes, we were comforted and enriched by the stories about these Friends, as we joined to celebrate their lives. They were models for us on how to approach death with grace. Their contributions to the life of the meeting continue to be felt.

As the Meeting House is adjacent to the Yonge Street Friends Burial Ground, we were privileged to participate in the Meetings for Burial for Friends from Toronto Meeting and share in the hospitality that followed.

While we learn much that was previously unknown about departed Friends in these Meetings for Worship, we are strongly reminded of the importance of knowing one another more deeply while we are together. During 2019, Yonge Street Friends used QuakerSpeak in a number of post-meeting discussions as a stimulus for sharing. As noted in one report, “We have been buoyed up by the opportunity to talk, learn and grow together as individuals in fellowship with one another. Opportunities like these break down the barriers to experience love and the joy of being part of a faith community.”

We rejoice in the presence of three families with children, who participate regularly in our First Day School. A Friend has volunteered as the FDS Coordinator and regular child care is provided during meeting for worship and business meeting. Ministry and Counsel is grateful that the parents are now overseeing this scheduling. The Trustees have developed a Safe Nurture policy, tailored to the needs of a smaller meeting. This will be implemented in 2020. It is available to any monthly meetings interested in considering a policy of their own.

We were delighted to welcome David and Marion Newlands' family to the Meeting House when they celebrated the 50th anniversary of their wedding at Yonge Street. The gathering was a joyous event that had many of the elements that are present at memorial meetings - friends, photographs, memorabilia, good food and laughter - but with the addition of the promise of more fellowship still to come in the future.

The House and Premises Committee for this old meetinghouse is very busy. In addition to regular cleaning and maintenance, projects in 2019 included repairing the roof and doors, interior painting, installing a baby change table, grading the driveway and parking lot and organizing gardening and seasonal clean ups. Friends are willing to volunteer to help, but the oversight rests on this small committee, whose efforts are deeply appreciated. To our relief, the lengthy re-construction of Yonge Street is complete, with only landscaping to be done.

Our Peace, Environment and Social Action Committee continues to minister to vulnerable persons who are discharged from the court in Newmarket, while also providing purses filled with toiletries for women discharged through the College Park Court in Toronto. This program is managed by the Elizabeth Fry Society and seems to echo how Elizabeth Fry herself visited the women convicts and children, before they left for Botany Bay. "Each woman was given a bag of useful things."

Yonge Street Meeting hosted Half-Yearly Meeting in May, featuring a program entitled "Strengthening our Quaker Community," presented by Steve Fick and Signy Fridriksson. Their strategies for more effective communication, creative use of conflict and building/rebuilding connections were very relevant to our experiences as a faith community. The day was well-attended and provided ample opportunities for much socializing and worship for Friends who joined us from Hamilton and Toronto Meetings.

Some of our members attended Canadian Yearly meeting in Winnipeg in August and enjoyed the fellowship with the wider family of Canadian Friends. In addition to attending CYM in session, 11 members from Yonge Street serve on CYM committees and bring back to our meeting the experiences of working and worshipping with Friends from across Canada.

Though we have been blessed by the attendance of younger individuals and families, we continue to ponder the ways to reach out to others who may be seeking a spiritual community. We are also looking for ways to develop leadership in our meetings to foster the spirit in others to take on responsibilities towards the Religious Society of Friends.

As Arthur Larrabee says in a QuakerSpeak video. "Our understanding and experience of God is nurtured and enlarged in community. When we come together in community, each of us brings our own manifestation of the divine energy. When we come together in community, we experience and embrace our diversity; we experience a much larger understanding and vision of God."

Little Britain Worship Group

Little Britain Quakers continued to meet weekly throughout 2019 under the care of Yonge Street Monthly Meeting. Our worship group consists of one family year round, plus a couple (also from Yonge Street) who live in the area seasonally. We have not yet had any success attracting our friends, neighbours, and extended family. We remain hopeful.